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Children's Behavior and Child Care

O F C

An early childhood education agency

RESPONDING TO CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR



Many people who work with young children have questions about how to respond to children's behaviors they find difficult, like fighting, biting, and arguing over toys. Over time, how you respond to behavior issues can have important results on the success of your program and on the development of children in your care.

This issue of *Update* shares information to help you create a child care environment that helps young children develop positive social skills and self-control. There are many strategies to achieve these goals. The statement of appropriate practice from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, for example, encourages you to use techniques like:

- Setting clear limits
- Modeling and encouraging expected appropriate behavior
- Redirecting children to more acceptable activities
- Involving children in developing their own solutions to conflicts

Whatever techniques you use, to be effective they must start with taking the time to look at yourself and the relationship you have built with children in your care and their parents. Strong relationships start from a foundation of trust – children feel safe around adults who support them, who show an interest in their activities, and who respond to their needs. Strong relationships are also built when children are given a chance to develop their independence – to make their own choices and do things for themselves.

All this work will take practice and patience. It is also useful to practice a few other “p’s” that are outlined in the following pages:

- Programming
- Partnering with Parents
- Problem-solving

Update

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THE PATH TO POWERFUL PROGRAMMING -----



Child care programs that are well organized with lots of exciting activities for children experience fewer behavior

problems. Why is this? Strong programming is part of the answer. Here are some important steps to follow on the path to perfect programming:

Find a theme or area of interest. Take your time to involve the children in selecting a theme that holds everyone's interest and that will bring meaning and excitement to their activities. Good programming is not just thinking of many isolated things to keep children busy. When ideas connect

through a theme or project, programming will be more in depth and long-term.

Transform your space. Find ways to weave your program theme throughout your space. If the theme is insects, go for walks, observe or collect insects, put insect books in the quiet area, place insect puzzles and games on the shelves, and draw, paint, and make papier-mâché insects in your art area.

Limit your limits. If children have to wait for instructions, are interrupted too soon for clean-up, or have to do things in large groups with everyone too many times, they will lose interest in what they are doing.

Create lasting projects. Many of the most meaningful things with children will take time to develop. We don't take them apart, clean them up at the end of the day, and never return to them again. Instead, plan activities that will give children a chance to return day after day to their ever-changing projects.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS -----

Getting help from parents to problem-solve children's behavior issues is a lot easier when you have established good relationships and they know you to be a kind, caring professional.

Parents should not be expected to correct children's behavior in a car ride home or to punish children at home for things that happen while in child care. That is the child care provider's job.

We involve parents to share information, to plan together, and to work together on better ways to interact with children. Parents often have helpful hints, useful insights, and clues to understanding children's behavior.

As with everything else relating to parents and children, we cannot be perfect, always right, and total experts. We do not even have to have the solutions to each and every problem. But we can reassure parents in two ways:

- By responding quickly to their concerns.



- By showing that we take their concerns very seriously.

If we respond quickly when parents express concerns, we let them know that the issue is important to us. We may not have all the information, but we need to get back to the parents, immediately.

If we show them that we are not avoiding an issue, but are working on a solution, they will appreciate our efforts.

When parents feel that you welcome their ideas, questions and concerns, you have started a partnership that benefits everyone – especially children.

PROBLEM-SOLVE CONFLICTS AWAY! -----



Conflicts with children are normal in child care. It is how you handle them that counts.

Do you:

Say no to children who disrupt your child care routines?

Use bribes or rewards to get children to do what you want?

Try to win power struggles?

Hopefully, the answer is none of the above. Instead, you use your communication and negotiation skills to problem solve. This simple five-step process will help you move from conflict to problem solved!

Identify the Problem. You may not like that a child disrupts an activity, but the child may not like the activity. Until you examine all sides of the problem you can't reach a solution.

Look for Solutions. Ask for children's ideas. Be creative. List as many ideas as possible even the unusual ones.

Select a Solution. Involve children in choosing a solution. Sometimes we need to be willing to try something a little unusual – that might be the idea that works.

Implement the Solution. This is the test phase. Give the solution time to work.

Evaluate the Solution. Talk with children about how things are going. Evaluate the situation for yourself. If things are not working, go back to your list and choose something different.

Problem solving takes time, but look at the benefits: Instead of bossy, unsatisfied adults and submissive, resentful children, caregivers and children learn and grow together when they work through the conflict. Just as important, children learn that negotiation and communication solve conflicts, not power.

Food for Thought

The word “No” — Adults say “no” too often to children. Even a qualified yes, as in “You can do that if I’m standing here to catch you” is better than an automatic no. Tell children what they can do.

Bribes or Rewards — It is unethical (and against State licensing regulations) to bribe or reward children with food. We manipulate children when we offer rewards for good behavior. Children know this and learn to resent it. Adult appreciation and acceptance motivate true behavior change in children.

Power Struggles — Do you really want to win a struggle and make the child a loser?

READER ROUNDUP -----

Read what some of our readers say they do when it's raining outside, the children are full of energy, and it looks like the day could spin out of control.

Sung Novakowski

I just pull out all the toys and we play. I have music on all day. We do lots of dancing to the music and drawing too.

Concha Taylor

I ask them what they want to do. We try something different and messy. We made cookies and a few are learning how to cook their breakfast. They love to do real things and things they can do themselves. A few of the girls are learning how to knit and I enjoy teaching them these things.

More reader comments on back page.

READER ROUNDUP

It's rainy outside, the children are full of energy, and you sense the day could spin out of control. What would you do to make the day work for everyone? Read what our readers had to say. More comments inside.

Lidia Burk

I put on the music and pull out the game boards. I bring out toys that aren't normally out and it feels like all new toys. I also bring out a big gym map. They love to tumble to the music. They also like to dance along with the songs.

Darlene Stemple

Bundle them up and let them play in the rain. Sometimes you just have to play in the rain. My kids are young and some just like to look

out the window at the rain. I put the water table in front of the sliding glass door, and they play in the water inside and watch the water fall outside! I put out the mat, balance beam, tunnel and climber. We are really busy and play hard. Even rest time is smooth because we are all ready to rest.

Rima Aladawi

One of the things the kids like is when an older child reads aloud to them. Sometimes I act out what is happening in the story so it is like a movie too. We set up a pretend school and they decide who is the teacher and who are the students. They really like the parachute and playing games with the parachutes. Mostly we have fun and that makes everyone's day good.